POWER
AND PARTICIPATION

A GUIDE TO
LGBTIQ POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY AND ACTIVISTS

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

In early 2017, Triangle Project (Triangle) and the LGBTQ Victory Institute (Victory Institute), with the support of the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice and the Open Society Foundation for South Africa, commissioned a research report into the political participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) persons in South Africa.

This research report reflects the process and results of that study, conducted between April 2017 and September 2017.

This guide forms part of the broader work of Triangle and the Victory Institute towards increasing the participation of LGBTIQ people in democratic processes in South Africa, and achieving equality for LGBTIQ people. Additional elements of this work include training LGBTIQ activists and advocates who are interested in democratic processes to get more involved in political spaces, and civil society forums to create a platform for the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and best practice around the political participation of LGBTIQ people.

Two of the project's objectives were to identify best practices to encourage political participation from black LGBTIQ persons, and to identify opportunities to increase the number of LGBTIQ people that are part of political parties' structures. This best practice guide seeks to address those objectives, based on recent research by Triangle and the Victory Institute.

2

LGBTIQ POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
1994 – 2017: THE BENCHMARKS

Between April and September 2017 Triangle and the Victory Institute conducted research in South Africa regarding the history of LGBTIQ political participation in South Africa since 1994.

This involved interviews with political parties, interviews with civil society, and an online survey for LGBTIQ persons to self-report on the obstacles to and opportunities for political participation.

SOME KEY FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH[1]

1 There are an estimated 530,000 LGBTIQ persons in South Africa. If all of these South Africans were to vote for the same political party, it could win that party between 10 and 17 seats in Parliament, depending on voter turnout.

2 Political parties displayed an openness and willingness to include LGBTIQ members within their political parties and to support human rights for LGBTIQ persons in South Africa.

3 To date, there had only been nine elected/appointed LGBTIQ officials within South Africa, and the perception of their impact was that they had not necessarily been LGBTIQ activists. However, their presence was important for the representation and acceptance of LGBTIQ political figures.

4 South Africa has incredibly progressive legislation related to human rights for LGBTIQ persons, but activism and political participation around these rights had slowed since 1994 for several reasons, including:

- Fragmentation of the LGBTIQ sector, challenges in access to funding and resources.
- The perceived closure of political spaces to meaningful engagement.

5 LGBTIQ respondents to the survey exhibited enthusiasm for political participation, and were likely to have voted in the past three elections, however they were unlikely to be members or volunteers of political parties.

6 LGBTIQ respondents, like South Africans surveyed in similar surveys, were most concerned with the issues of education, basic services and jobs when voting though this varied slightly by race.

For white respondents leadership, basic services and jobs were listed as the most important.

For black respondents education, basic services and jobs were the most important issues. However, black respondents were most likely to highlight LGBTIQ issues as amongst the issues important to them. This indicates that the black LGBTIQ community is interested in parties' stance on these issues when going to the polls.

7 Political parties were not likely to have any specific policies addressing human rights for LGBTIQ persons, or to have considered them as a constituency.

8 Most participants did not feel that political parties were performing well with regards to LGBTIQ issues, and a significant number were not sure of the party's performance, perhaps speaking to a lack of awareness of political party decisions and performance.

9 Despite low levels of interaction with local government, when respondents were asked whether they would like to participate further in politics, 45.33% indicated that they would. In addition, 58.29% of respondents felt that more representation of LGBTIQ politicians within parties would mean that their needs would be addressed better. This points to an opportunity for political parties to encourage LGBTIQ members within their parties to take up leadership positions, in order to encourage party support by LGBTIQ voters.

Given these findings, interview candidates were provided with an opportunity to make recommendations regarding increasing access to political participation opportunities and spaces for LGBTIQ persons.

These recommendations are detailed in Section 3.

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[1] Thorpe, J on behalf of the Triangle Project and the LGBTQ Victory Institute (forthcoming)
LGBTIQ political participation in South Africa since 1994

In many instances, for civil society actors, a distinction was made between spaces that organisations or individuals were invited to ('invited spaces' or 'inside strategies') and those that were created outside of government processes ('invented spaces' or 'outside strategies'). All respondents felt that there was a need to use both kinds of spaces, as well as a third space for strengthening the LGBTIQ sector internally.

Best practice recommendations for each of these spaces are provided in the following sections.

3.1 MAXIMISING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INVITED SPACES

Table 1 opposite provides a summary of some of the key recommendations for activists and organisations when using 'invited' spaces to advance human rights for LGBTIQ persons.

More detail is given in the sections that follow.

TABLE 1: USING INVITED SPACES TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT

INVITED SPACES **WHERE GOVERNMENT INVITES CIVIL SOCIETY** **OR INDIVIDUALS TO PARTICIPATE**	
3.1.1 **BUILD RELATIONSHIPS**	Provides an opportunity to build relationships in government with those willing to make a difference. Don't wait for an invitation, reach out.
3.1.2 **SHOW UP**	Getting your name/your organisation's name onto the mind of the government/politicians is important. You won't have a voice if you're not there.
3.1.3 **YOUR APPROACH MATTERS**	It's important to go to these spaces with a willingness to engage, but there is also a need to know what your bottom line is.
3.1.4 **USE INVITED SPACES** to build your own networks and solidarity	Often these spaces provide an opportunity for organisations and individuals to network and build relationships.
3.1.5 **DON'T BE APOLOGETIC** about what you're asking for	Organisations should not compromise to make government feel more comfortable. Sometimes more radical action (e.g. a protest in these spaces) might be more effective. Go to the table, be critical, and don't assume that they will take everything you say into account.
3.1.6 **SEND REPRESENTATIVES** who will represent the broader group	Representatives in invited spaces should be aware that they are not just there to represent their own organisation, but should be thinking of the entire sector, and encouraging government to be more inclusive. This requires relationship building within the LGBTIQ sector, and for these representatives to caucus before meetings.
3.1.7 **BE SUPPORTIVE** of LGBTIQ politicians and party representatives	The trend has been to consider those who enter these spaces as sell-outs, when they should be seen as partners. Build relationships with LGBTIQ political representatives and support them.
3.1.8 **BE HUMBLE AND PRAGMATIC**	Don't assume that everyone understands the issue, and at the same time don't assume that everyone is 'an idiot'. Create a context of information sharing and honesty.

3.1.1   BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

Invited spaces might not always meet the immediate or short-term needs of your particular organisation, activism or campaign. However, in many instances these spaces provide an opportunity to build relationships in government with those willing to make a difference. These relationships can provide long-term opportunities for engagement, and to build relationships with the political decision makers who can advance human rights for LGBTIQ persons.

Don't wait for an invitation, reach out. If you know that a government meeting is happening, or have partner organisations who are going to such a meeting, reach out to the organisers. In many instances, government departments or bodies would welcome the opportunity to engage with a broader group, but do not have all the necessary contacts.

3.1.2   SHOW UP

Getting your name or your organisation's name onto the mind of the government/politicians is important. You won't have a voice if you're not there. Attending meetings is a good way to getting invited to more meetings. This links to point 3.1.1 (above), and requires a long-term focus on the issues and human rights that you want to advance.

What works at one level of government (e.g national), might not work at another (provincial or local). The same strategies might not even work across departments, provinces or municipalities. So there is a need to show up, be noticed, and to examine which strategies might work.

3.1.3   YOUR APPROACH MATTERS

It's important to go to these spaces with a willingness to engage, but there is also a need to know what your bottom line is. In many instances, because the agenda is not set by the LGBTIQ sector 'invited' meetings or spaces can be controlled by political priorities that are contrary to your aims. It's therefore important that, as a representative of the sector, you set a bottom line for what it is that you want to get out of invited spaces, and when you will absent yourself from them.

That being said, it's important not to immediately assume that 'invited spaces' won't be receptive to your needs or demands. That's why your approach matters: go with a willingness to engage, but make sure you know what you're there for.

3.1.4   USE INVITED SPACES

Use invited spaces to build your own networks and solidarity. It has become increasingly difficult for civil society organisations to hold the network-building meetings that are important to strengthen the sector. However, when invited spaces focus on a shared issue, it is likely that colleagues from the sector will also be at the meeting.

These spaces can thus provide an opportunity for organisations and individuals to network and build relation-ships. In addition, they can provide an opportunity to build consensus around sector positions for particular goals.

3.1.5   DON'T BE APOLOGETIC

Don't be apologetic about what you're asking for. Try to make it clear what your issue is, and what you want to change to address it. This creates clarity for all persons involved in trying to address the issue as you begin to try various political channels.

Organisations should not compromise to make government feel more comfortable. Sometimes more radical action (e.g. a protest in these spaces) might be more effective. Go to the table, be critical, and don't assume that they will take everything you say into account.

3.1.6   SEND REPRESENTATIVES

Send representatives who will be representative of the whole group. Representatives in invited spaces should be aware that they are not just there to represent their own organisation or their own interests, but should be thinking of the entire sector and encouraging government to be more inclusive.

This requires relationship building within the LGBTI sector, and for these representatives to caucus before meetings. This links to 3.1.5 above, where the space before meetings and during breaks can be important for sector representatives to caucus and engage on the issues under discussion to try to drive a clear message in the meetings, and advance human rights for LGBTIQ persons in a coherent way.

BE SUPPORTIVE

Be supportive of LGBTIQ politicians and representatives.

The trend has been to consider those who enter these spaces as sell-outs, when there is also the opportunity to see them as partners.

Building relationships with LGBTIQ political representatives and allies can help to keep human rights for LGBTIQ persons on their agenda, when working in other areas. If you ensure that LGBTIQ lawmakers and allies are aware of your organisation's interest, there is more likelihood of them using this knowledge to the advantage of human rights for LGBTIQ persons.

Similarly, supporting LGBTIQ politicians and representatives (via attending their meetings, events or motions in parliament) can send a message to other political representatives that these are issues that affect a broad population in society.

3.1.8 **BE HUMBLE AND PRAGMATIC**

Don't assume that everyone understands the issue, and at the same time don't assume that you are the only one who grasps the issues. Create a context of information sharing and honesty.

3.2 MAXIMISING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INVENTED SPACES

Table 2 opposite provides a summary of some of the key recommendations for activists and organisations when using 'invented' spaces to advance human rights for LGBTIQ persons. More detail is given in the following sections.

3.2.1 KEEP THE PRESSURE ON

It's important not to mitigate what you're saying because you've been at a government meeting. The use of inside and outside strategies is important to keep the pressure on. Invited spaces don't occur throughout the year and are often determined by political cycles.

Using opportunities outside of invited spaces (such as holding a march, initiating a campaign or staging a protest) can help to keep the pressure on the politicians involved in the invited spaces. It also helps to keep the public aware of what you're doing, so that pressure on government comes from other partners too, and from the broader public.

3.2.2 PRACTICE RADICAL EQUALITY

Ensuring that all partners and organisations are equally aware of project goals and involved activism creates more sustainable activism. Shift the decision making power back to the people who are affected by the decisions. Don't just have a bunch of people at a protest because you need the numbers. Make sure people are informed, and actively involved in the issue. Not all members/parts of a coalition are going to agree. But it is best to address these disagreements honestly and frankly within the movement or coalition, so that the focus is on the goal.

Name and challenge the power dynamics within an alliance. If people are speaking 'on behalf of' other organisations, then those organisations should have a say in what is being said. Representatives should commit to representing.

TABLE 2: USING INVENTED SPACES
TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS FOR LGBTIQ PERSONS

INVENTED SPACES
SPACES THAT CIVIL SOCIETY CREATES OUTSIDE OF GOVERNMENT SPACES, SUCH AS MARCHES, MEETINGS AND FORUMS

3.2.1	KEEP THE PRESSURE ON	Help to keep the public aware of what you're doing, so that pressure on government comes from other partners too. Don't mitigate what you're saying because you've been at a government meeting. Use inside and outside strategies.
3.2.2	PRACTICE RADICAL EQUALITY	Shift the decision making power back to the people who are affected by the decisions. Don't just have a bunch of people at a protest because you need the numbers. Make sure people are informed and actively involved in the issue.
3.2.3	BE CLEAR in communication, and use all avenues	In any campaign the communications capacity must include an understanding of different audiences. Work through the media and new media, utilizing new media strategically.
3.2.4	KNOW YOUR ISSUE AND YOUR STAKEHOLDERS	Map all stakeholders to make sure you reach everyone who can be involved/should be involved. Include political parties in this mapping, to see how your work can link to theirs.
3.2.5	TAKE THE ISSUE INTO COMMUNITIES and build the movement from the ground up	Actually take the issue into the communities and into community spaces to ensure that people support or are at least aware of why these issues are important.
3.2.6	CONSIDER the best level of government/best avenue for action	When you're thinking about which level of government to interact with you have to ask what the issue is, where the power point is (i.e. national, provincial or local). For example, if the issue is access to justice you'll be looking at national and local, or gay marriage (national), or school (all three).
3.2.7	INVITE POLITICAL PARTIES TO YOUR EVENTS/ ENGAGEMENTS	Many decisions are made at a party level, before they even get to formal government processes. Keep political representatives aware of LGBTIQ issues, and informed. Share knowledge brochures, pamphlets and links with members to empower them.
3.2.8	CONSIDER TAKING UP MEMBERSHIP OF A POLITICAL PARTY	Use your membership to influence the discussions, and raise human rights for LGBTIQ persons within these spaces where it is safe to do so.

3.2.3   TAKE THE ISSUE INTO COMMUNITIES

Take the issue into communities and build the movement from the ground up. There is the need to build educational elements into any campaign so that the number of people who can speak on the issue is expanded. This could include running political schools within LGBTIQ NGOs or CSOs (see 3.3.1)

Civil society responses and research from Atlantic Philanthropies (2013) suggests that there is a need to build consensus when campaigning around LGBTIQ issues, where groups work together, strategise together around goals and messages, whilst also being able to pursue approaches and tactics that are best suited to their organisations' and service-users' needs and values.[2]

Although differences may arise, these should not be seen as dysfunctional or insurmountable, but rather "coming at the issue with a diversity of approaches can create power, energy, and opportunity"[3] but only if strong relationships and consensus are built first.

3.2.4   BE CLEAR IN COMMUNICATION

In any campaign or political effort it is important to have a clear message about what the issue is, what you want to change, and who needs to change it. This means planning your message for different audiences and working through the media and new media, and understanding how to use both methods strategically.

[2] Atlantic Philanthropies (2013) *Catalysing LGBT Equality and Visibility in Ireland: A review of LGBT cluster grants, 2004 – 2013*. Atlantic Philanthropies, Republic of Ireland.
[3] Ibid

3.2.5 CONSIDER THE BEST LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT

When you're thinking about which level of government to interact with you have to ask what the issue is, where the power point is (i.e. national, provincial or local). For example, if the issue is access to justice, you'll be looking at national and local, or gay marriage (national), or school (all three).

Once you've done this, you can map your stakeholders, as described in 3.2.6.

3.2.6 MAP YOUR STAKEHOLDERS

Map all stakeholders to make sure you reach everyone who can/should be involved. This should include mapping state and non-state actors. For each issue it is different. But look at the broad selection of stakeholders starting from the local level outwards. The question you want to ask here is: what allies can we work with? Which ones will take a stand on LGBTIQ issues? What avenues can we follow?

When you are looking at the state, consider government as a whole (ward councils, municipal councils, provincial departments, provincial legislatures, national departments, national parliament, the courts, departments), Chapter 9 organisations (such as the South African Human Rights Commission, the Commission for Gender Equality, and the Public Protector).

Don't forget to consider non-state actors including political parties (branches, particular individuals, conferences coming up), the media, trade unions, and civil society organisations or movements that might impact or be impacted by your issue, and international organisations (funders, monitoring bodies, international NGOs).

INVITE POLITICAL PARTIES

Invite political parties to your events or meetings. Many decisions are made at a party level before they even get to formal government processes. Keep political representatives aware of LGBTIQ issues, and informed. Stay 'on the ball' politically, be aware of shifting politics and leadership of political parties. This will help with strengthening the sector, and convincing government and political parties that the LGBTIQ sector is a constituency they should be thinking of.

Reaching out to all political parties can give you a better chance of getting these issues on the political agenda across the political spectrum.

3.2.8 **CONSIDER TAKING UP PARTY MEMBERSHIP**

Becoming a member of a political party is one way to keep human rights for LGBTIQ persons on the agenda of political parties. In addition, research has shown that just the presence of LGBTIQ persons within political structures has a positive impact on other representatives' likelihood of supporting LGBTIQ issues.[4]

Use your membership to influence the discussions, and raise human rights for LGBTIQ persons within these spaces where it is safe to do so.

3.3 BUILDING THE MOVEMENT

Table 3 opposite provides a summary of some of the key recommendations for activists and organisations to build the strength of the LGBTIQ sector in order to advance human rights for LGBTIQ persons.

[4]LGBTQ Victory Institute (2016b) More than Represent: *LGB State Lawmakers Influence Marriage Equality Laws*. June 2016. The Gay and Lesbian Victory Institute

TABLE 3: BUILDING STRENGTH IN THE LGBTIQ SECTOR

BUILDING THE SECTOR FOR SUSTAINABILITY	
1 **THINK LONG-TERM**	All actions in both invited and invented spaces should take into account the best way to defend gains, and should be strategic. In addition, there is a need to preserve the open spaces that have been gained, for further advancement.
2 **ACCEPT DIFFERENCES**	Not all members/parts of a coalition are going to agree. But it is best to address these disagreements honestly and frankly within the movement or coalition, so that the focus is on the goal.
3 **ADDRESS INTERNAL POWER DYNAMICS**	Name and challenge the power dynamics within an alliance. If people are speaking 'on behalf of' other organisations, then those organisations should have a say in what is being said. Representatives should commit to representing.
4 **ALLOW FOR FLEXIBLE STRATEGIES** and document progress/challenges	What works at one level of government (e.g national), might not work at another (e.g provincial or local). The same strategies might not even work across departments, provinces, or municipalities. So there is a need to show up, be noticed, and to examine which strategies might work.
5 **BUILD SAFE SPACES** for activism around human rights for LGBTIQ persons	Build community partnerships: In some communities activism around human rights for LGBTIQ persons remains dangerous. Work on building partnerships with community organisations including religious organisations where necessary, to create a sense of solidarity.
6 **BUILD CAPACITY** within the sector, and between sectors	There is the need to build educational elements into any campaign so that the number of people who can speak on the issue is expanded. This could include running political schools within LGBTIQ NGOs or CSOs.
7 **DIVISIONS WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY DISADVANTAGE CIVIL SOCIETY**	Work should be dedicated to building alliances, coalitions and movements. Invite representatives from broader movements (e.g. health, social justice, education etc.)Invite representatives from broader movements (e.g. health, social justice, education etc.) to your meetings so that they take up LGBTIQ issues in their platforms.
8 **ENGAGE MORE REGULARLY WITH POLITICAL PROCESSES**	Stay 'on the ball' politically, aware of shifting politics and leadership of political parties. This will help with strengthening the sector, and convincing government and political parties that the LGBTIQ sector is a constituency they should be thinking of. Engage with officials in political parties who can be allies and become paid up members.

3.3.1   POLITICAL EDUCATION

Conducting political education training within the LGBTIQ sector will help to raise the political consciousness of LGBTIQ persons, and to help raise community awareness of LGBTIQ issues. Recent research indicates that most people are not even aware of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) protections in the Constitution[5], thus there is a need to reach out.

The more you invest in being taken seriously as an active member of your community, the more chance there is other community members will be interested in supporting your cause, and the less chance there is that your community will be able to ignore it.

Telling personal stories and ensuring that community members get to meet and know LGBTIQ persons and activists can be important for changing perceptions and promoting political support. This could include reaching out to religious institutions within your community to ensure that they are informed about LGBTIQ issues, and are held accountable in any instances where they do not promote equality for LGBTIQ persons.

3.3.2   FOCUS ON POLITICAL CYCLES & COMMITMENTS

Take note of political cycles that could be useful opportunities to raise this issue, or that could make it more difficult to address the issue (e.g. elections, local government meetings and Integrated Development Plan (IDP) comment sessions, parliamentary cycles, or particular commemorative days). Map these out, and see what opportunities arise for participation.

If you have raised political consciousness around human rights for LGBTIQ persons in communities, then you should be aware

[5] The The Other Foundation and HSRC (2015) *Progressive Prudes: A survey of attitudes towards homosexuality and gender non-conformity in South Africa.* HSRC, Johannesburg

of the commitments of politicians and political parties. Where the behavior of political representatives differs from their verbal or written commitments to human rights for LGBTIQ persons they should be questioned on this personally, and publically. There is the potential to "work both inside what [is] politically possible, and outside to expand what was politically possible.".

3.3.3   BUILD ALLIANCES

Work should be dedicated to building alliances, coalitions and movements. Invite representatives from broader movements (e.g. health, social justice, education etc.) to your meetings so that they take up LGBTIQ issues in their platforms.

3.3.4   PLAN LONG-TERM

All actions in both invited and invented spaces should take into account the best way to defend gains, and should be strategic. In addition, there is a need to preserve the open spaces that have been gained, for further advancement.

3.3.5   PROMOTE LGBTIQ LEADERS

Within your organisations, movements, or communities, identify LGBTIQ persons who have the potential to lead on issues, and support them in raising their voice through endorsing their statements, attending meetings they call, and promoting the development of strategies around LGBTIQ leadership.

Encourage these leaders to become members of political parties and push for human rights for LGBTIQ persons to be addressed within party policy. Develop relationships with political mentors, and draw on their advice.

4 CONCLUSION

The political participation of LGBTIQ South Africans is important to ensure that law and policy that promotes human rights for LGBTIQ persons takes their voices, needs and concerns into consideration. However, law and policy is not sufficient to create an equal society.

This requires that the LGBTIQ sector ensures that it continues to raise awareness of the need for, and importance of, participating politically amongst LGBTIQ persons. This guide provides recommendations for civil society to ensure that the constitutional commitment to equality is realised.
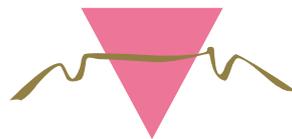
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